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CEREBUS

GOING HOME

9

$2.25 U.S. $3.50 CANADA

240
MAR

CEREBUS
GOING HOME
9
240
MAR

The sunlight exalted itself, sudden and brilliant, washing a majestic tide of gold into every [redacted] creamy and corner of the dockside setting blanching the gray squalor, passing over, around and through

The sunlight, sudden and brilliant, exalted itself. It washed a majestic tide of gold across aged gray timbers into every creamy and corner of the dockside [redacted]. [redacted]

The sunlight, sudden and brilliant, exalted itself. It washed a majestic silent tides of gold across the aged [redacted] timbers. It streamed into each [redacted] corner and crevice of the dockside

The Sunlight, sudden and brilliant, exalted
10 PLEASURE'S SIMPLE LIFE
making a *stew!*"

It had been a simple and sophomoric prank which they had thought might enliven the tedious lives of these wealth-encumbered "worthies"— who seemed always to have exhausted all essential human energies in attaining to their state of insular materialism. If he and Xena had suffered, as a result, from the misperception that they were mere entertainers—jesters to the court—Anthony could console himself that his genuine work, once it had been brought to irrefutable fruition through his own hard labour and inspiration, would discount the perceived notion. Those who had, from whatever motives, subscribed to the idea would find themselves looking more than a little foolish that they had chosen to entertain it in the first place.

It was difficult for Anthony, these days, to reconcile the Jay Anthony Diver of those dark times with his present-day counterpart. Even in the smallest detail of his

Sunlight, sudden and brilliant, exalted itself in that moment, washing silent and majestic tides of gold across the aged and decaying timbers, stream

Sunlight, sudden and brilliant, washed silent and majestic waves of gold across the aged, and decaying timbers [redacted] and into each corner and crevice of Moreton Bay before this gray and

2 PLEASURE'S SIMPLE LIFE

entirety.

AWAKENING

Sunlight, sudden and brilliant, washed a silent and majestic wave of

CEREBUS

NO. 240 MARCH 1999

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GOING HOME

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BOOK ONE
Sudden Moves
(Cerebus 232 to 239)

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BOOK TWO
Fall and the River
(Cerebus 240 to 250)

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BOOK TWO

FALL AND THE RIVER

"Scott was drunk a good deal of the time back then, but that didn't distinguish him from anyone else in Great Neck."

Groucho Marx on former
Great Neck, Long Island
neighbour F. Scott Fitzgerald

"...a sick old man — not very funny stuff."

Groucho Marx on the sober
Fitzgerald in Hollywood
ca. 1937

entirety.

AWAKENING

Sunlight, sudden and brilliant, washed a silent and majestic wave of gold across aged, decaying timbers and into each corner and crevice of the bustling dockside scene at Moresh. Before the unexpected onslaught the gray and dismal morning fled, finding refuge — here and there — in the cramped confines of small and sullen shadows.

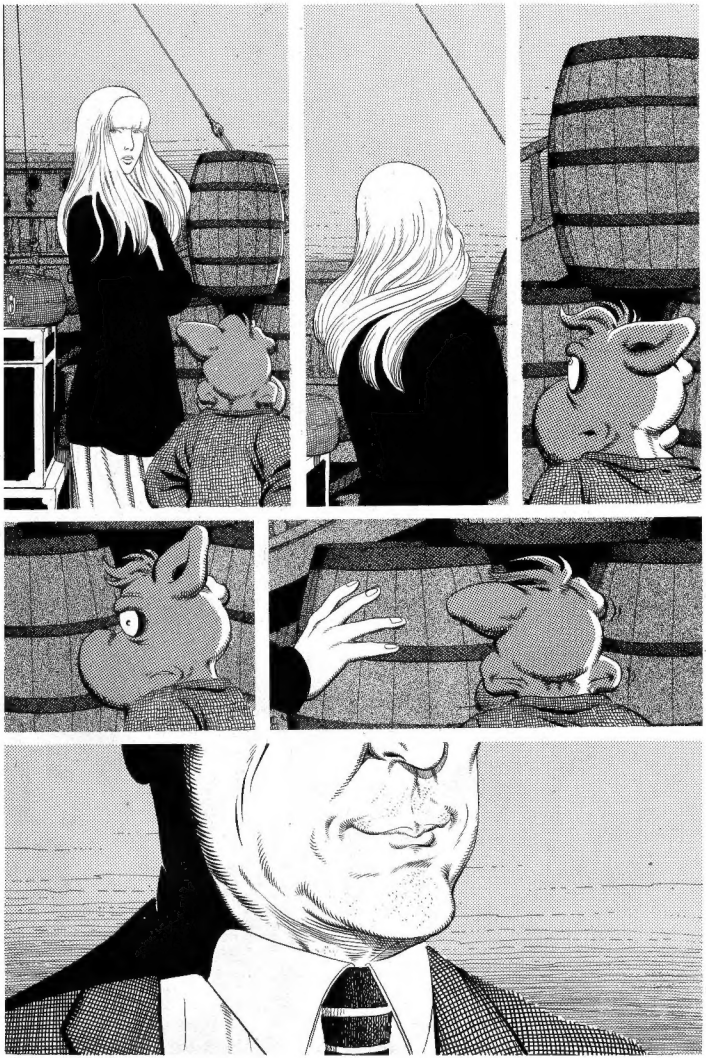
The gilded brilliance and warmth passed over, around, and through Jay Anthony Diver, and some small part of his mordant introspection and studied indifference seemed to melt a little in its wake. Unwitting embers of interest lit the blackened ashes of his dormant curiosity, and — with a single languid movement of his head — Anthony looked around.

Their eyes met and embraced in a momentary *frisson* of recognition. In the next instant she had looked away, her unmistakable aristocratic features finding concealment behind the rippling curtain of her breeze-blown hair.

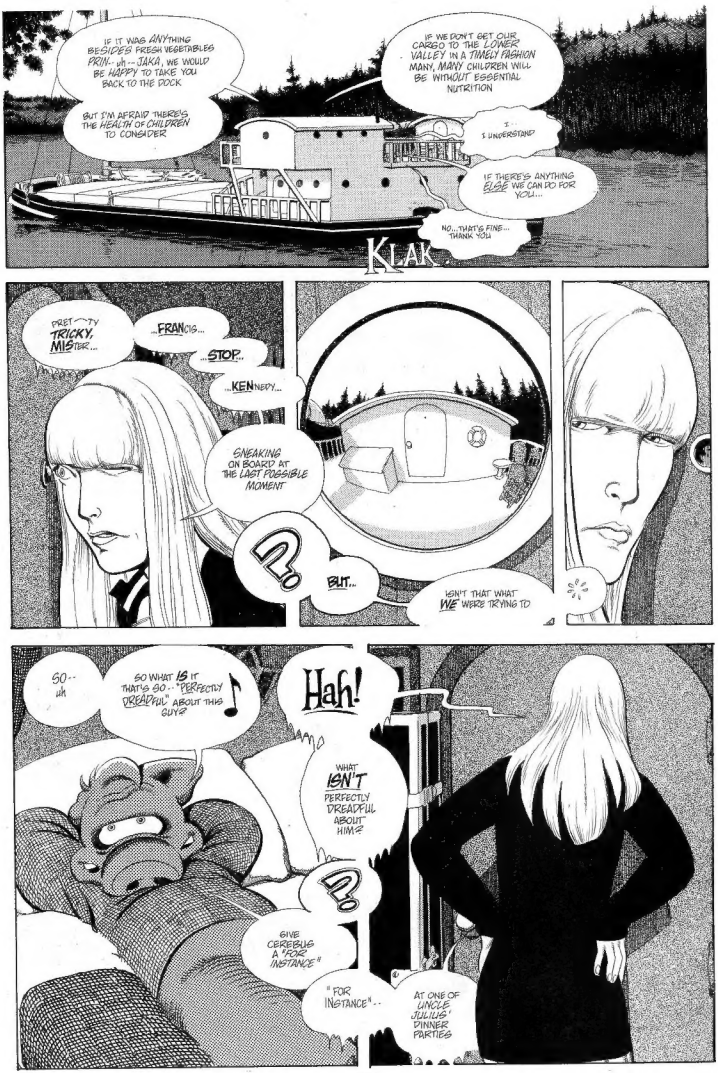
Her companion, thick-set and dwarfish, left off his critical examination of the massive barge rocking gently at anchor before him and strained his attentions towards her. Listening intently for a few moments, he began to turn in Anthony's direction. She gestured sharply and the movement was arrested.

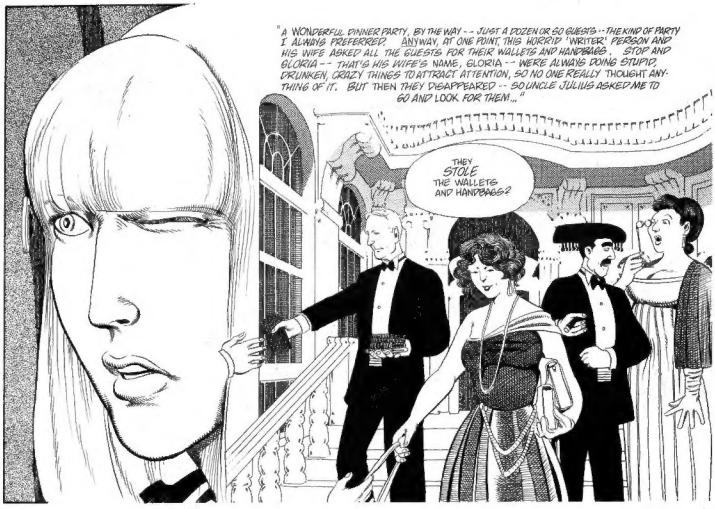
For the first time in a very, very long while, the slightest trace of a smile began to play at the corners of Jay Anthony Diver's mouth.

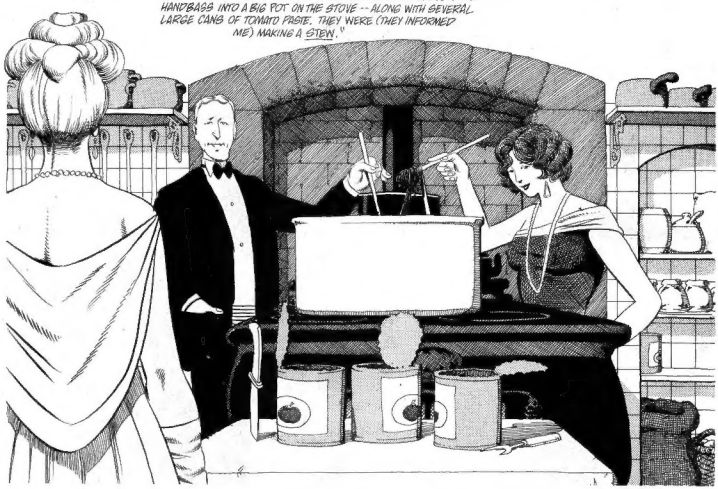
"I'm being discussed," he thought, experiencing the strange mixture of rueful apprehension and hopeful, wounded vanity that served as the frayed and faded tapestry of mood before which he enacted — rather than lived — this particular period of his life.



HIS NAME IS F. STOP KENNEDY AND HE'S A PERFECTLY DREADFUL MAN.
IS HE LOOKING AT US?
DON'T LOOK!
HAVE YOU MADE YOUR DECISION?
SO!
?!
HOW CAN CEREBUS TELL IF HE'S LOOKING AT US IF...?
YES THE BARGE SUITE WILL BE FINE.
?!
IT WILL?!!
IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND SEEING TO OUR THINGS
WE'LL GO ABOARD IMMEDIATELY
OH! OF COURSE
?!
WE WILL?!
BUT...
YOU JUST FINISHED SAYING THAT YOU WANTED TO WAIT FOR A BETTER--
BUT...
CEREBUS! PLEASE! I JUST WANT TO GET ON BOARD WITHOUT ATTRACTING ANY MORE
POOOORTERS! THE PRINCESS'S LUGGAGE! ON THE BARGE! NOW!
ATTENTION...?!


IF IT WERE ANYTHING BESIDES FRESH VEGETABLES FROM- uh--JAKA, WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO TAKE YOU BACK TO THE DOCK
BUT I'M AFRAID THERE'S THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN TO CONSIDER
IF WE DON'T GET OUR CARGO TO THE LOWER VALLEY IN A TIMELY FASHION MANY, MANY CHILDREN WILL BE WITHOUT ESSENTIAL NUTRITION
I UNDERSTAND
IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE WE CAN DO FOR YOU...
NO...THAT'S FINE... THANK YOU
KLAK
PRETTY TRICKY, MISTER...
...FRANCIS...
...STOP...
...KENNEDY...
SNEAKING ON BOARD AT THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT
?!
BUT...
ISN'T THAT WHAT WE WERE TRYING TO
SO-- uh
SO WHAT IS IT THAT'S SO..."PERFECTLY DREADFUL" ABOUT THIS GUY?
Hah!
WHAT ISN'T PERFECTLY DREADFUL ABOUT HIM?
?
GIVE CERBERUS A "FOR INSTANCE"
"FOR INSTANCE"..
AT ONE OF UNCLE JULIUS' DINNER PARTIES

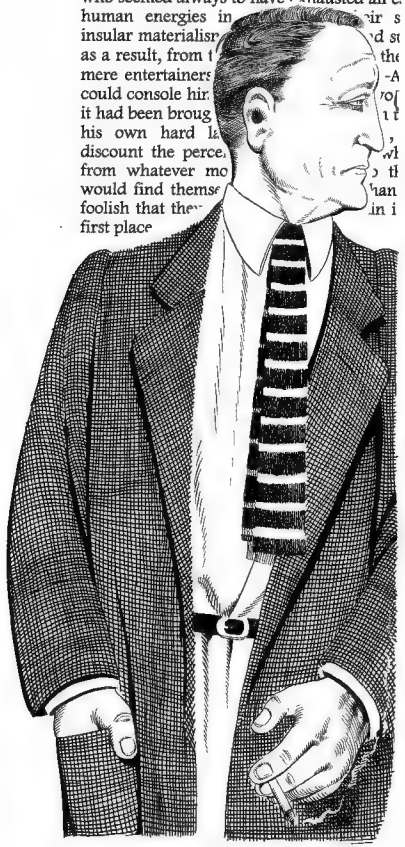

"A WONDERFUL DINNER PARTY, BY THE WAY -- JUST A DOZEN OR SO GUESTS -- THE KIND OF PARTY I ALWAYS PREFERRED. ANYWAY, AT ONE POINT, THIS HORRID 'WRITER' PERSON AND HIS WIFE ASKED ALL THE GUESTS FOR THEIR WALLETS AND HANDBAGS. STOP AND GLORIA -- THAT'S HIS WIFE'S NAME, GLORIA -- WERE ALWAYS DOING STUPID, DRUNKEN, CRAZY THINGS TO ATTRACT ATTENTION, SO NO ONE REALLY THOUGHT ANYTHING OF IT. BUT THEN THEY DISAPPEARED -- SO UNCLE JULIUS ASKED ME TO GO AND LOOK FOR THEM..."
THEY STOLE THE WALLETS AND HANDBAGS?


"OH, HEAVENS NO.... THAT WOULDN'T BE STUPID, DRUNKEN OR CRAZY ENOUGH FOR F. STOP AND GLORIA KENNEDY. NO, NO. I FINALLY FOUND THEM IN THE KITCHEN. THEY HAD DUMPED ALL OF THE WALLETS AND HANDBAGS INTO A BIG POT ON THE STOVE -- ALONG WITH SEVERAL LARGE CANS OF TOMATO PASTE. THEY WERE (THEY INFORMED ME) MAKING A STEW."

HAHAHAHAH
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
HONESTLY.
YOU'RE AS BAD AS UNCLE JULIUS.
HE THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY TOO.
WELL IF HE BOTHERS YOU THAT MUCH, WE'LL JUST DO WHAT THE CIA!:
WHAT THE MOTHER SAID AND HAVE ALL OUR MEALS SENT IN --- OR SCHEDULE DIFFERENT MEAL AND OUTDOOR TIMES...
...AND HAVE THE MOTHERS TELL THIS "STOP" CHARACTER TO LEAVE!!"
AND HAVE HIM THINK I'M HIDING FROM HIM?!
HAH!
I SHOULD SAY NOT!!
GREAT!
LET'S GO HAVE A LOOK AROUND
WITH HIM SPYING ON US THROUGH HIS PEEPHOLE?
WHOOO, WOOT! ME.
WE'LL WAIT FOR HIM TO COME OUT FIRST

making a *stew!"*

It had been a simple and sophomoric
which they had thought might enliven the
lives of these wealth-encumbered "worth
who seemed always to have exhausted all e
human energies in
insular materialis
as a result, from t
mere entertainers
could console hir
it had been broug
his own hard l
discount the perce
from whatever mo
would find themse
foolish that the
first place



in those days, it had seemed that he and Xena had existed in a glittering world of Anthony's creation—far above conventional conceits of decorum and "proper" conduct. If Xena had danced that night—provocatively and alone— and had needed to be assisted to their room by liveried servants, why, Jay Anthony Diver could not be more pleased. Xena was remarkable, singular, exceptional, and these dull-witted dowagers and gold-hatted gadflies should count it their great good fortune and privilege to have been a part of Xena's audience, however temporarily.

Anthony had swaddled himself and his drink within an approximation of this attitude when he had been approached, tentatively, by his host's niece.

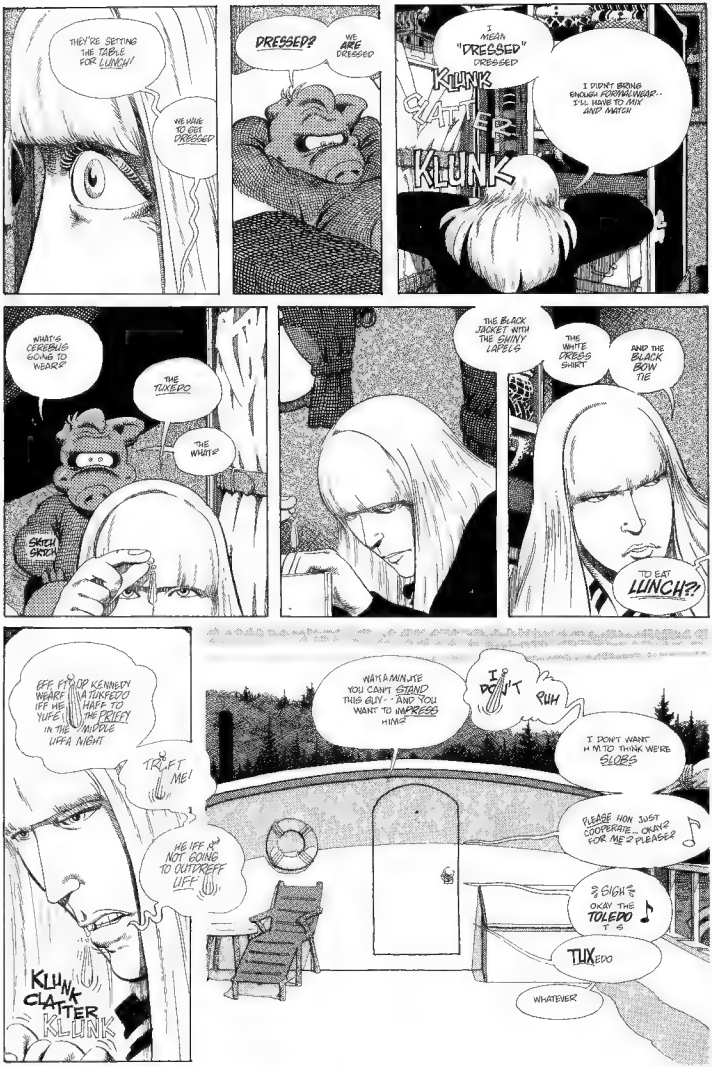
"I'm so sorry about your wife."

Jay Anthony had smiled at her through a thin aperture in his self-restraint. Ginevra. Ginevra, the much-loved "people's princess." Rumour had it that she had only recently returned to her palatial homestead under a cloud of scandal. She had been working as a common tavern dancer—which had, evidently, caused her to miscarry her unborn child. Events subsequent to this, it was said, had led to her husband's imprisonment and might yet lead to his execution.

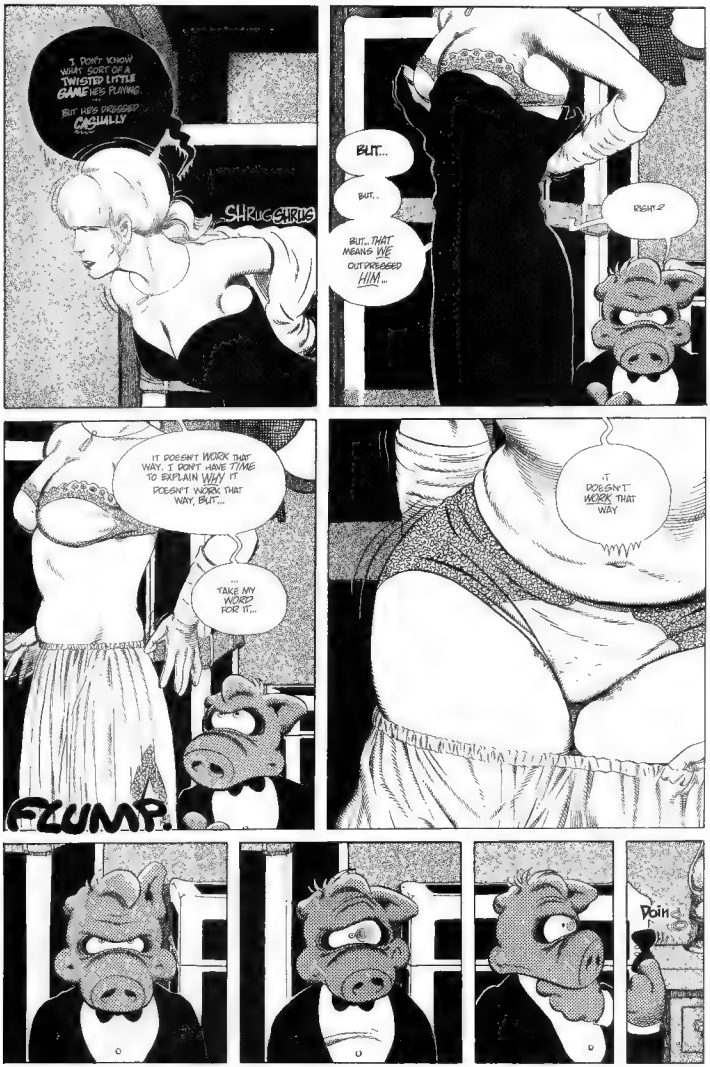
"From what I understand," he had remarked, drily, "I'm rather sorry about your husband as well."

Her features had gone quite dark with rage, and she had left him there, regretting his insensitivity. Only briefly, of course. Back in those days, within innumerable bottles (brightly illustrated with deceptively amusing pictures of their host), sensitivity and insensitivity had swum side by side. In the fiery dregs, the two would become indistinguishable, and it often seemed that decanting another bottle represented the best hope of restoring them to their adversarial existence.

Ginevra's features—and his regret at being the instrument of their transfiguration—had lingered, inexplicably, in his memory even as the night drew on into the misty realms of early morning. A

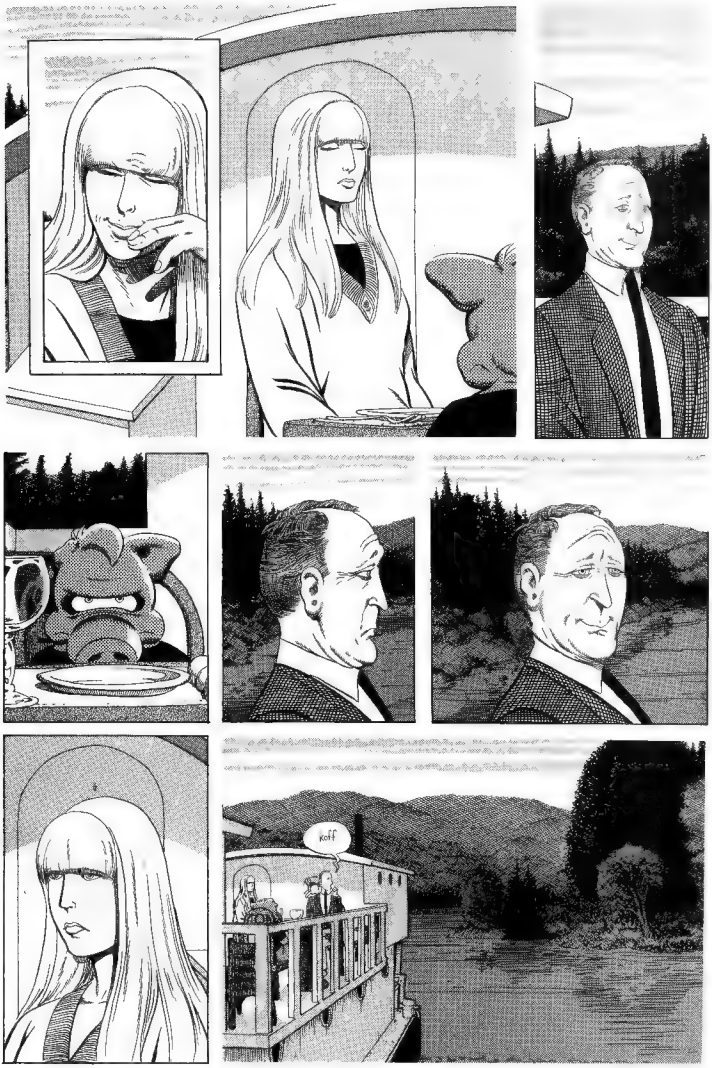

THEY'RE SETTING THE TABLE FOR LUNCH!
WE HAVE TO GET DRESSED
DRESSED?
WE ARE DRESSED
I MEAN "DRESSED" DRESSED
I DIDN'T BRING ENOUGH FORMAL WEAR.. I'LL HAVE TO MIX AND MATCH
KLUNK CLATTER KLUNK
WHAT'S CEREBELLUS GOING TO WEAR?
THE TUXEDO
THE WHAT?
SKRCH SKRCH
THIS BLACK JACKET WITH THE SHINY LAPELS
THE WHITE DRESS SHIRT
AND THE BLACK BOW TIE
TO EAT LUNCH?!
EFF I'M NOT WEARIN' IFF ME YUFE IN THE UFFA NIGHT
TRUFT ME!
ME IFF R NOT GOING TO OUTDREFF LIFE
KLUNK CLATTER KLUNK
WAIT A MINUTE YOU CAN'T STAND THIS GUY - AND YOU WANT TO IMPRESS HIM?
I DON'T
PUH
I DON'T WANT H M TO THINK WE'RE SLOBS
PLEASE HON JUST COOPERATE... OKAY? FOR ME? PLEASE?
SIGH
OKAY THE TOLEDO T S
TUXEDO
WHATEVER

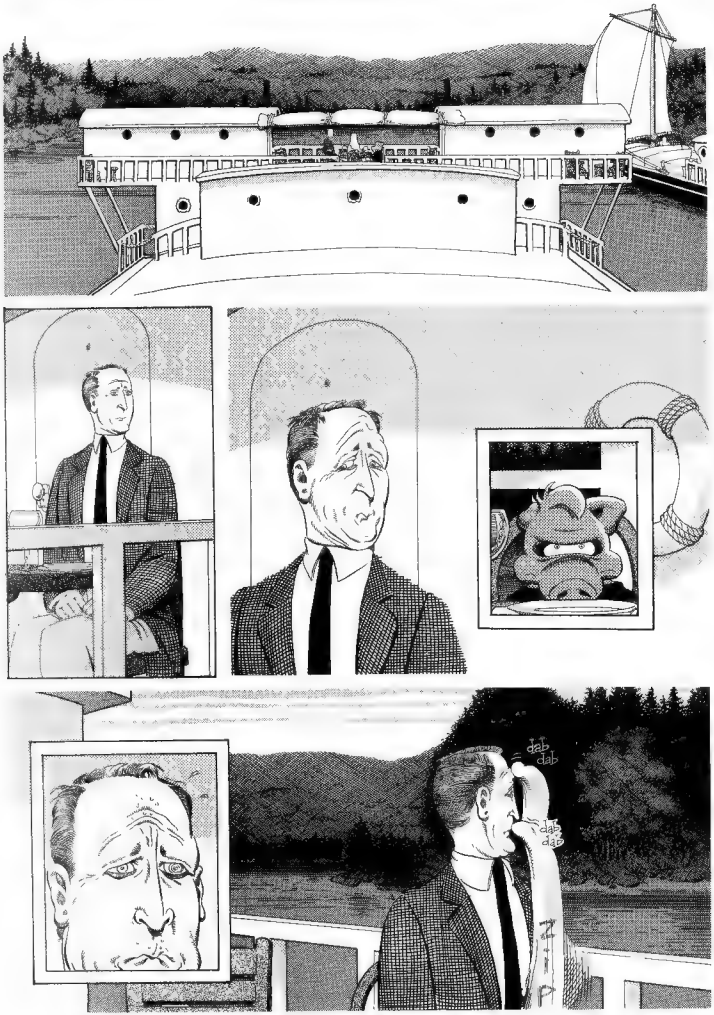
HEY MAN
TADA dump TADA dump
WE HAVE TO GET CHANGED.
Whaat?


I DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF A TWISTED LITTLE GAME HE'S PLAYING.
BUT HE'S DRESSED CASUALLY
SHRUGSHRUG
BUT...
BUT..
BUT...THAT MEANS WE OUTDRESSED HIM...
RIGHT?
IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN WHY IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY, BUT...
...TAKE MY WORD FOR IT...
FLUMP.
...IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY
Doin

ALL RIGHT. NOW... WE'RE GOING TO BE VERY "STAND-OFFISH" TOWARDS HIM
IF HE SAYS ANYTHING TO YOU JUST NOD...OR SHAKE YOUR HEAD ...OR GRUNT... OR SHRUG YOUR SHOULDERS OR SOMETHING TO SHOW HOW DISINTERESTED YOU ARE...
O-KAY... HERE WE GO.
WITH ANY LUCK AT ALL HE'LL TAKE THE HINT AND HAVE THE REST OF HIS MEALS IN HIS STATEROOM
AND WE WON'T SEE HIM FOR THE REST OF THE TRIP
OKAY?
AYE.
ARE YOU READY?
AYE
KA-KLAK
THANK YOU
MY PLEASURE
AHEM.

?
?
Oh!
SORRY there, old man... I don't ...that is...
Usually.
Ehm.
zip
:koff:


koff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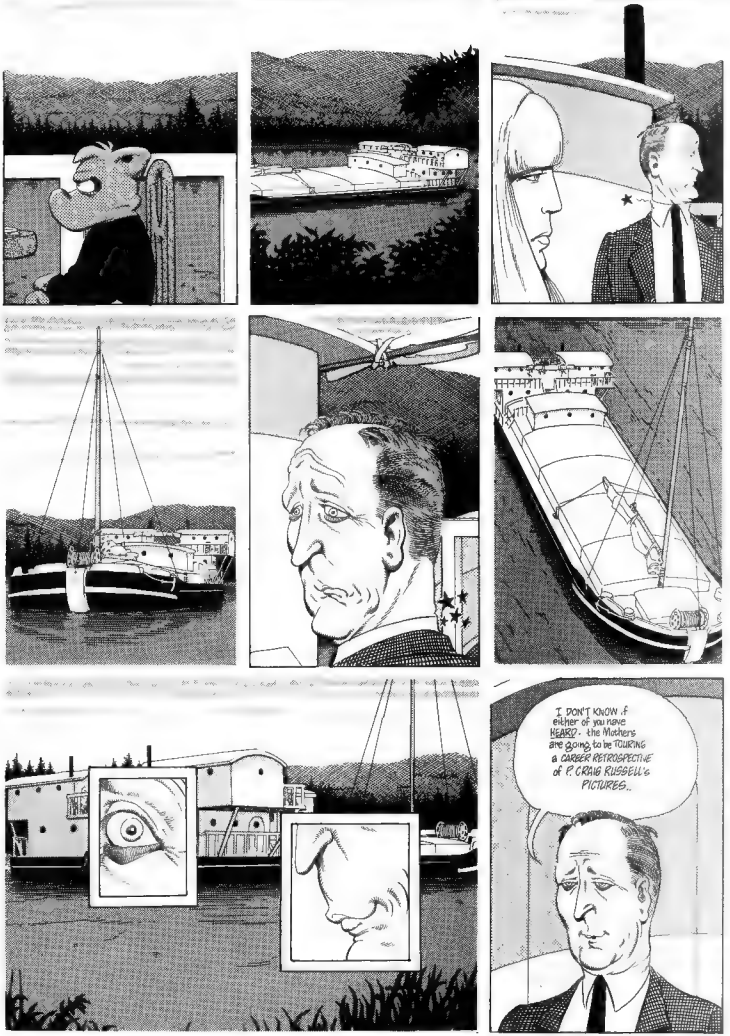
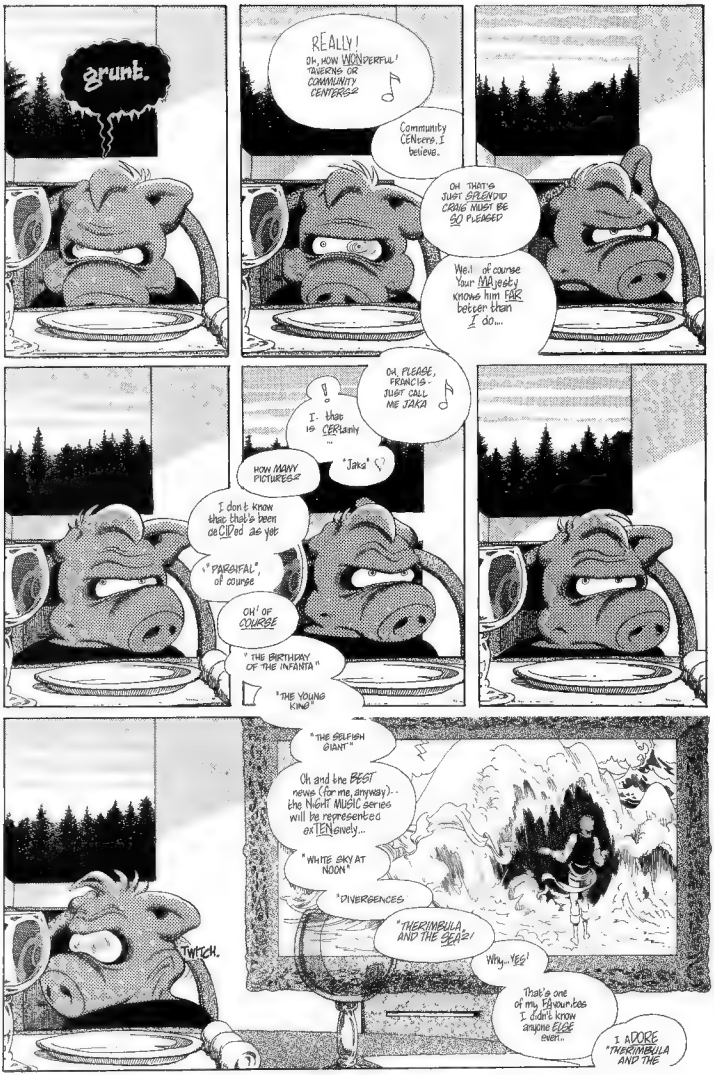

I DON'T KNOW if either of you have HEARD- the Mothers are going to be TOURING a CAREER RETROSPECTIVE of R. CRAIG RUSSELL'S PICTURES..


grunt.
REALLY! OH, HOW WONDERFUL! TAVERNS OR COMMUNITY CENTERS?
Community CENsers, I believe.
OH, THAT'S JUST SPLENDID CRANG MUST BE SO PLEASED
Well of course Your MAjesty knows him FAR better than I do...
OH, PLEASE, FRANCIS - JUST CALL ME JAKA
!
I- that is CERtainly ...
"Jaka"
HOW MANY PICTURES?
I don't know that's been oCUPed as yet
"PARSIFAL", of course
OH! OF COURSE
"THE BIRTHDAY OF THE INFANTA"
"THE YOUNG KING"
"THE SELFISH GIANT"
Oh and the BEST news (for me, anyway) - the NIGHT MUSIC series will be represented exTENsively...
"WHITE SKY AT NOON"
"DIVERGENCES"
"THERIMBULA AND THE SEA"!
Why... YES!
That's one of my FAvourites I don't know anyone ELSE even...
I aDORE "THERIMBULA AND THE
TWITCH.

CHASING SCOTT

As Alan Moore rather famously (to me, anyway) remarked in answer to my praise of his "meticulous appendices" to *From Hell* and his self-deprecating tone:

> *As regards my self-deprecating tone during the appendices, it wasn't any kind of modesty so much as a gruff attempt at apology for having done such a fucking sloppy and unprofessional job. I mean, 'I think I read this in some book somewhere, but I can't be bothered to look for it' is hardly the high standard of investigative reportage that* From Hell *is often touted as being, is it?*

The reader of these notes stands warned that "Chasing Scott" will adopt exactly this kind of "sloppy and unprofessional" approach to the year or so of research that I have devoted to creating my fictional F. Scott Fitzgerald. Inclined as I am to make apologies both for myself and Alan (and for any future comics creator who chooses to annotate his or her own work in this way), ours is not — I don't think — the ordered and meticulous mind of the "scholar squirrel," as Gore Vidal described the pre-eminent Fitzgerald biographer, Matthew J. Bruccoli, in his devastatingly witty review of *The Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald,* edited by Mr. Bruccoli.

Anyone researching the life of F. Scott Fitzgerald, one way or another, is going to owe a considerable debt to Professor Bruccoli. While I disagree with many of his conclusions, inferences, and implications, his *factual* research is without rival or peer, and he has expended so much time and energy in making his factual research widely available that (if nothing else) he has single-handedly raised all debate about Fitzgerald (and the relationship of Scott and Zelda) to a more informed level by his prodigious efforts. If his enthusiasm for Fitzgerald — man and author — crosses thresholds of reason in the view of Gore Vidal…

…But I'm getting ahead of myself:

Page 167 — "Fall and the River" is almost a direct steal of the title of one of Tom Wolfe's books, of *Time and the River.* Wolfe, along with Fitzgerald and Hemingway, was one of Scribners' trio of major authors under the editorship of Max Perkins (Fitzgerald was the first). Since "Fall and the River" has been developed with the express intention of "pushing the envelope" of what constitutes plagiarism, tribute, satire, and parody, this seemed a good way to begin.

Page 168 — The Groucho Marx quotes are from Sheilah Graham's *The Real F. Scott Fitzgerald.* I went to the library this morning to check her attribution. Not only was the book not there, but it has vanished from the Kitchener Public Library system. More on this in a moment.

According to Matthew J. Bruccoli's *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald,* in 1927 the Fitzgeralds (that is, Scott's money) rented a small house at 6 Gateway Drive in Great Neck, Long Island "…about fifteen miles from the city, on the Long Island Sound side or North Shore of Long Island…" and the area was favoured by "show business types." Bruccoli's list of residents includes Ed Wynn, Eddie Cantor, Herbert Bayard Swope, Tom Meighan, Gene Buck, and Lew Fields. The absence of Groucho Marx's name from the list would indicate to me that he and Scott did not travel in the same liquor-sodden Roaring Twenties Great Neck circles, so I'm really stretching a point in describing Scott as Groucho's "Great Neck, Long Island neighbour." I succumbed to the temptation for the added resonance it provided in Jaka's recollection of F. Stop and Gloria being at one of Lord Julius' parties.

As diplomatically as possible, I'll point out that Sheilah Graham — the Hollywood gossip columnist with whom Fitzgerald was cohabitating at the time of his death — is the only one of Fitzgerald's biographers who considers Sheilah Graham's importance in his life to have been dramatically underrated. She wrote three books about their "life" together: *Beloved Infidel* (which was, evidently, made into a movie which I look forward to seeing in exactly the same spirit in which I looked forward to seeing the original Ed Wood Jr. "classic" *Plan 9 From Outer Space*), *College of One* (New York: Viking, 1967, for all you scholar squirrels), which was concerned with Scott's curriculum of classic reading materials intended to "bring her up to speed" so that they could at least pretend to converse (in my opinion, Scott's reference in his notebooks that "You can usually scare a certain amount of brains into a woman but usually you can't make them stick" was written around this time), and the aforementioned and now MIA *The Real F. Scott Fitzgerald.* Really wish I had it, because the sub-heading was something along the lines of "The definitive biography of Fitzgerald written by the woman who knew him best," which I thought must have had the badly charred remains of Zelda pinwheeling in her St. Mary's grave.

In the 1970s, Sheilah Graham wrote *How to Marry Super-Rich: Love, Money and the Morning After,* to which, for obvious reasons, I see no need to add any further observation.

Page 169 — Depicting F. Stop Kennedy proved something of a challenge since very few pictures of Fitzgerald exist — and those that do seldom look like they are taken of the same person. I decided to use Carl Van Vechten's two pictures taken in Encino, California, 4 June, 1937 (Yale University Library) as a "jumping-off" point, but (the artistically inclined reader-viewer is warned) I didn't

really feel that I had gotten close to the Scott Fitzgerald I picture in my head until F. Stop reseated himself after pulling Cerebus' chair out for him.

In the background, Aline Kominsky-Crumb and "the Soph" lead Robert Crumb by the hand to their new life in Mealc, Estarcion's version of the south of France. Any analogies to be drawn between this and Scott and Zelda ending up in the south of France in the early twenties are left up to the reader-viewer's own discretion (or lack of same).

Page 170 — All of the text pieces contained in "Fall and the River" are modelled, both visually and in terms of content, on F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* (Scribners, 1922). The title of F. Stop Kennedy's book, *Pleasure's Simple Life*, I ran across in one of my old notebooks that I was flipping through. "Pleasure's Simple Lives" was all it said. I have no recollection of writing it, but I was certainly pleased to run across it at such an opportune moment. The typeface is Footlight Light, which is not an exact match but is pretty darn close. This first text piece is also the exact size of the text in *The Beautiful and Damned*'s original printing. All subsequent pieces are slightly taller to fit the more elongated traditional comic-book page.

All of the writing on this text piece is my own, and the finished piece is, I believe, "take twelve." I tried to imitate Scott Fitzgerald's own tendency to overwrite and rewrite extensively, which is a very perilous business, writing-wise. The trick is to try to put a fine polish on every phrase without losing the original sense and spontaneity of expression. In the early going, I only worked on the text pieces on Saturdays when I was severely hung over from alcoholic overindulgence on my Friday night "sprees." I assume that Scott wrote most of his stuff hung over, so I thought I'd give it a try in the interests of authenticity. It was not a lot of fun.

F. Stop Kennedy's fictionalized name, Jay Anthony Diver, is a mixing of three Fitzgerald male "leads" from his novels: Jay Gatsby (*The Great Gatsby*), Anthony Patch (*The Beautiful and Damned*), and Dick Diver (*Tender is the Night*).

Page 172 — The name "F. Stop Kennedy" came to me pretty early in the proceedings — which is to say in late 1997. It tended to elicit a small chuckle from those few confidants I bored senseless with my "Scott-talk" (George and James, specifically, in the early months). By the time the Monica Lewinsky "scandal" was really rolling, it was getting genuine belly laughs (from the men, anyway).

Curiously, I ran across this in *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* when I was looking up the Great Neck material (pg. 263, scholar squirrels):

> *The year 1927 brought a series of nervous ailments, which may be what Fitzgerald was referring to in three puzzling* Ledger *notes for August-September: "Terrible incessant stoppies begin"; "Stoppies worse"; "Stoppies now reached its height."*

Strange, eh?

So far as I know, Norman Mailer (as usual) was the first to recognize some zeitgeist connection between Scott Fitzgerald and John F. Kennedy in his *Esquire* article "Superman Comes to Supermarket," written during the 1960 Presidential Campaign and reprinted in Mailer's *The Presidential Papers* (G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1963). In describing the demonstrations on the floor of the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, Mailer wrote:

> *Besides, the personnel had something of the Kennedy élan, those paper hats designed to look like straw boaters with Kennedy's face on the crown, and small photographs of him on the ribbon, those hats which had come to symbolize the crack speed of the Kennedy team, that Madison Avenue cachet which one finds in bars like P. J. Clarke's, the elegance always giving its subtle echo of the Twenties so that the racoon coats seem more numerous than their real count, and the coloured waistcoats are measured by the charm they would have drawn from Scott Fitzgerald's eye. But there, it occurred to one for the first time that Kennedy's middle name was just that, Fitzgerald, and the tone of his crack lieutenants, the unstated style, was true to Scott. The legend of Fitzgerald had an army at last, formed around the self-image in the mind of every superior Madison Avenue opportunist that he was hard, he was young, he was In, his conversation was lean as wit, and if the work was not always scrupulous, well, the style could aspire. If there came a good day...he could meet the occasion.*

Extremely prescient (of course, saying that about Mailer is something of a redundancy) in light of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

I would speculate that — as a young man at Harvard — John F. Kennedy (who was more of a Hemingway fan) would've been aware of Fitzgerald's work. Fitzgerald dreamt of being a war hero and an aristocrat — or the degraded American version: extremely wealthy — both of which JFK could put little mental tick marks next to before he was thirty years old.

Page 174 - F. Stop Kennedy's wife's name, Gloria, is taken from the name of the female "lead" in *The Beautiful and Damned*, Gloria Patch, née Gilbert. This anecdote is related in several of the books that I read and constitutes one of the crazier examples of Scott and Zelda's crazy behaviour at the height of their notoriety. I'm not sure that it's true, because I have yet to have seen it attributed to a specific occasion and/or location (I'm part scholar squirrel, I admit it). It is always just referred to as taking place "at a party." Scott and Zelda were very aware that their success was bound up with their notoriety, and my best guess would be that their philosophy in the early Twenties was that "any publicity is good publicity," "as long as they spelled the names right," etc. For sheer "nuttiness," I think it is rivalled only by the legend that, disappointed in their first trip to Hollywood (Scott's film

treatment — called *Lipstick* — had been rejected), they piled all of the furniture up in the middle of their hotel room and placed their unpaid hotel bills on top and left. The hotel (odd bit of synchronicity) was the Ambassador in Los Angeles, where Robert Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, by some accounts, passed a few fervid afternoons and where the Senator was shot in 1968. Make of that what you will.

Page 176 - *Cerebus* scholar squirrels who are interested in reading an unobstructed version of this text piece fragment (it was written only to the point where it disappeared behind F. Stop Kennedy's right shoulder) are welcome to search out a copy of *Cerebus* No. 240 (March, 1999) where it appeared on the inside front cover.

Page 177 - Jay Anthony Diver's wife's name, Xena, is taken from a late-20th-century television show, *Xena, Warrior Princess* (about which the less said the better, in my view). F. Stop Kennedy's fictionalized name for Jaka, Ginevra, has as its point of origin Ginevra King, a Minneapolis beauty and debutante who was F. Scott Fitzgerald's first choice in his search for the "best girl" (whatever that means). Even in the last few years of his life, Fitzgerald was still nursing the wound of her rejection. In his daily ledger he wrote, "Taking things hard, from Ginevra to Manciewicz" (Joseph Manciewicz, the producer, had rewritten Fitzgerald's *Three Comrades* script, on the set).

This text piece, again, is all me, trying to capture Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* voice. The reference to "gold-hatted gadflies" in the first paragraph is a "too cute for words" tribute to one of Scott Fitzgerald's alternate titles for *The Great Gatsby:* Gold-Hatted Gatsby.

Ginevra King. "Gin Every King"? It's probably just me. Never Mind.

Page 185 - P. Craig Russell is a comic-book writer/artist and also a sometime commercial illustrator. He is best known for his comic-book adaptations of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales (NBM Publishing, New York) several of which are mentioned by name on…

Page 186 - …including *The Selfish Giant and The Star Child* (vol. 1: ISBN 1-56163-056-X), *The Young King and The Remarkable Rocket* (vol. 2: ISBN 1-56163-085-3), and *The Birthday of the Infanta* (vol. 3: ISBN 1-56163-213-9). One of Craig's earliest solo works was *Night Music 1*, published by the defunct Eclipse Publishing in the early 1980s and consisting of a long science-fiction story and a number of story fragments. Unlike F. Stop and Jaka, my personal favourite is "La Sonnambula and the City of Sleep" among the *Night Music* fragments. When Gerhard read my completed part of page 185, he said, enthusiastically, "We get to do P. Craig Russell pictures?" Since that hadn't been my intention, I selected a panel from "Therimbula and the Sea," which was all background with one little figure in the corner. "Me and my big mouth," quoth Gerhard when I showed him my completed part of page 186. "La Sonnambula and the City of Sleep" is almost all figures, which explains the disparity in preferences between myself and F. Stop Kennedy and Jaka (and Ger, as well, I'd imagine).

Apart from the fact that Oscar Wilde made his first appearance in *Cerebus* 120 and Scott Fitzgerald in *Cerebus* 240 (a strange symmetrical accident), there are a number of real-world connections between the two. From Fitzgerald's first novel, written in and around the time he had been inducted into the army and centering on his college days at Princeton (*This Side of Paradise*, 1920):

> *Tom D'Invilliers became at first an occasion rather than a friend. Amory* (Blaine, the Fitzgerald stand-in in *Paradise*) *saw him about once a week, and together they gilded the ceiling of Tom's room and decorated the walls with imitation tapestry, bought at an auction, tall candlesticks and figured curtains. Amory liked him for being clever and literary without effeminacy or affectation. In fact, Amory did most of the strutting and tried painfully to make every remark an epigram which, if one is content with ostensible epigrams, there are many feats harder* (I think that should be "discontent" and "many feats easier" — *This Side of Paradise* is rife with such inconsistencies). *12 Univee was amused. Kerry read "Dorian Gray" and simulated Lord Henry, following Amory about, addressing him as "Dorian" and pretending to encourage in him wicked fancies and attenuated tendencies to ennui. When he carried it into commons, to the amazement of the others at table, Amory became furiously embarrassed, and after that made epigrams only before D'Invilliers or a convenient mirror.*

Having "worked with" Oscar Wilde in *Jaka's Story* and *Melmoth*, this definitely attracted my attention. I assume that Scott was documenting (however thinly veiled) an actual situation he experienced at Princeton. So far as I know, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and all of Wilde's other works, as well as writings *about* Wilde, went "underground" after the trial and imprisonment in 1895. It was approximately two decades after that that Scott Fitzgerald was at Princeton, so I'm assuming that Wilde and his works resurfaced in the academic environment — probably with a healthy dose of "illicit allure" attached to them which, given the actual content of *Dorian Gray,* certainly wouldn't hurt their appeal for your average college freshman wanting to be a jaded "man of the world."

Was Scott Fitzgerald a closet gay? From my research, this notion seemed to become something of a *cause célèbre* in the early 1970s, right around the time that feminism was hitting the headlines in a big way. No big surprise there, as far as I'm concerned. The feminists quickly adopted Zelda as a brilliant artist oppressed by a domineering husband, and latent homosexuality is never far behind once the former gauntlet has been thrown down.

My own view is that Scott was "a little light in the loafers," but that that was more the result of his never quite growing up, in any meaningful sense of the term. Basically, it seems to me, he went from being a little boy to being "a sick old man" (as Groucho Marx put it), with no real stops in between (from Fitzgerald's *Notebooks*: "Something in his nature never got over things, never accepted his sudden rise to fame, because *all the steps weren't there"* — italics mine). All of his excesses of behaviour were really very childlike excesses: jumping fully clothed into the fountain outside the Plaza hotel, riding through New York on *top* of a taxicab, making purses and wallets and tomato sauce into a stew, piling all the furniture in his hotel in the middle of the room and putting his unpaid bills on top. This is not sophomoric behaviour, this is not adolescent behaviour; to me, this is *infantile* behaviour. And I believe he responded to *Dorian Gray* in the same way: as play-acting and dress-up (assuming that the early descriptions in *The Beautiful and Damned* of Anthony Patch with his "too elegant" robes and ties he would only wear around his apartment is autobiographical — and I'm assuming it is — the "dress-up" aspect shouldn't be overlooked).

Still, in this Androgynous Age, there is greater peril in being perceived to gloss over such a point than to assume the risk of belabouring it. So, by way of belabouring the point:

VIDAL ON SCOTT

The piece first appeared in the *New York Review of Books* (May 1, 1980) and is entitled "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Case." It was reprinted in a collection of Gore Vidal essays, *The Second American Revolution and Other Essays (1976-1982)* (Random House, New York, 1982), and addresses itself to *The Notebooks of F. Scott Fitzgerald* and *The Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (both edited by the ubiquitous Professor Matthew J. Bruccoli — he's written and/or edited twelve books about Fitzgerald).

As a great admirer of Gore Vidal's intimidating intellect, I would have to call it vintage Vidal. The first four pages encapsulate Fitzgerald's career and confine themselves to the administering of a few tactical flesh wounds and the flexing of literary muscle. Preliminaries and warm-up dispensed with, Vidal makes the dry-as-dust observation that *Notebooks* comes "highly recommended." James Dickey, poet and novelist, is quoted (from the back cover blurbs or advertisements would be my guess) as being of the opinion: "...they (*Notebooks of F. Scott Fitzgerald*) should be a bible for all writers. But one does not have to be a writer to respond to them — these notebooks make writers of us all." Vidal goes from dry to withering:

> *If true, this is indeed a breakthrough. Why go to Bread Loaf when you, too, can earn good money and get tenure by reading a single book?*

Ouch.

Budd Schulberg's quote places Fitzgerald with "the notebook masters, beyond Butler, Bennett, even Jules Renaud..." Vidal appends a "(*sic*)" to the latter name and then appends a few extraneous sentences, but after the "(*sic*)" all is, of course, anticlimax. Professor Bruccoli's Literary Praetorian Guard limps from the field, haemorrhaging credibility.

I'll spare the sensitive and the too-curious reader a blow-by-blow description of the ensuing literary bloodbath and skip forward to the point where Vidal prepares to administer the *coup de grâce* to the effectively sliced-and-diced Professor, beginning with Bruccoli's own observation that Fitzgerald is "the most fully documented American author of this century. We know more about Fitzgerald than about any of his contemporaries because he preserved the material...The best Fitzgerald scholar of us was F. Scott Fitzgerald." Vidal closes in for the kill:

> *Typing out these words I have a sense of perfect madness.* Scholar *of Fitzgerald? One sees the need for scholars of Dante, Rabelais, Shakespeare. But scholar of a contemporary popular writer who needs no introduction? Isn't this all a bit out of proportion? Are the academic mills now so huge and mindless that any writer of moderate talent and notoriety is grist?*

Now, this was extremely helpful to me when I read it after eight months of researching Fitzgerald (and it had been there the whole time in my own very modest "library"). Fitzgerald's biographers *do* tend toward excessive uncritical and sycophantic adulation. To have someone whose intellect I greatly admire (Vidal is second only to Mailer in representation in my "library") adopting a dissenting view assisted me in gaining a more...proportionate?...perspective on Fitzgerald's work, which had been somewhat skewed by my absorption in the subject.

Idle speculation: I think at least in part Vidal was taking offense as a more productive, more diligent, and (possibly) more gifted writer — as a writer, in short, more worthy of such scholarship than Fitzgerald, with his handful of thin novels. Of course, by the rules of the game, Vidal was not allowed to say that directly, but if that was, in part, his underlying thesis, I can't help but agree. It's all personal opinion, but I would stack up the last chapter (and particularly the last two pages) of Vidal's *The Judgement of Paris* very favourably against anything that I've read in the English language.

However, the subject was roses. Or, to put it more offensively, pansies.

And here, at least for myself, I have to separate Vidal the gifted writer from Vidal the homosexualist (Vidal made the excellent point some years ago that homosexual is an adjective, not a noun). Or, as Scott Fitzgerald referred to them not infrequently in his *Notebooks* and less frequently in his novels, "fairies." From Vidal's review:

> *In these* Notebooks *Fitzgerald makes rather too many nervous references to fairies and pansies. But then his attitudes towards the lesser*

*breeds were very much those of everyone else in those days: "(*Notebook reference number*) 1719 the gibbering dinges on the sidewalks; 1921 Arthur Kober type of Jew without softness... trying to realize himself outside of Jewry; 1974* Native Son *— a well-written penny dreadful with the apparent moral that it is a good thing for the cause when a feeble-minded negro runs amuck."*

In a literary court of law, I would characterize "nervous references" as highly speculative. If Scott Fitzgerald was, indeed, a closet gay, then the observation would be accurate. If Scott was hetero through and through, I would assume that the references weren't so much nervous as irritable (with undertones of heterosexual disgust). Speaking from a masculine heterosexualist vantage point, I think the other five "genders" (female heterosexualist, female bisexualist, lesbian, gay male and gay bisexualist) make this error of perception with disconcerting regularity: seeing nervousness and fear where all is irritation (with undertones of disgust) and among the less civilized of my persuasion (among whose number I do not, decidedly, count myself) anger (with violent and sometimes homicidal overtones and actions). It is why, I think, the crossing of thresholds from "tolerance" ("As long as they don't do it in the streets and scare the horses") to public "celebration" (Gay Pride parades) tends to strike such a sour note with the masculine heterosexualist societal minority (I'm not sure that the five other "genders" actually constitute a majority, but for all intents and purposes I think I can let that one stand). The subsequent *Notebook* references, to me, are just exercises in consensus building: if the five other genders can just co-opt the (mythical?) outrage of all Jews and all blacks to such dated references, we should be able to cast this WIC (White, Irish-Catholic) bigot out of the right-thinking global village. Where one goes when one is cast out of the right-thinking global village is, perhaps, a discussion for another time and place. Of course, I'm not including in the five principal other "genders" transsexuals, the transsexually inclined, tomboy heterosexualists, transvestites, or perhaps the only pinpoint minority really relevant to the discussion: genuine hermaphrodites.

To me, it really does constitute a matter of vantage point. As a confirmed heterosexualist I take no offense at Gore Vidal's line of argument. One builds one's consenses where one will, if one is of a mind to do so. But I think they are inaccurate, owing to Vidal's vantage point. There are flat assertions: "There are very few youths as handsome as Fitzgerald who go unseduced by men or boys in the sort of schools that he attended." I'm sure this is received wisdom in the homosexualist ranks, but I would speculate that (human nature being what it is) their statistics tend to be...ego-inflated? Likewise when Vidal quotes a letter Scott may (or may not) have sent to Zelda: "The nearest I ever came to leaving you was when you told me you (thought) that I was a fairy in the Rue Palatine..." Vidal snickers (and I admit I did as well): "The answer to that one is, stay away from the Rue Palatine." Of course, I snickered at the phraseology, having no heterosexualist idea that the Rue Palatine was pregnant with meaning, except through Vidal's wonderfully droll implication.

Just to drag Oscar Wilde back into the proceedings for a moment, let me quote him from his second trial (fourth day, Tuesday, April 30th, 1895 from *The Trials of Oscar Wilde,* William Hodge and Company, London, 1948, scholar squirrels), where Mr. C. F. Gill, on cross-examination, has asked about "the love that dare not speak its name":

What is the "Love that dare not speak its name"? — "The Love that dare not speak its name" in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo, and those two letters of mine, such as they are. It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the "Love that dare not speak its name," and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope, and glamour of life before him. That it should be so the world does not understand. The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it. (Loud applause, mingled with some hisses.)

An eloquent monologue to be sure, but (personally) I see nothing "beautiful," "fine," or "the noblest form of affection" in being masturbated by East End hoodlums in Kettner's private rooms over champagne and pheasant. And I think there *was* at one time genuine love between men which became indistinguishable from such sordid shenanigans as a direct result of Wilde's debacle and that Scott was justified in his *Notebooks* in observing ruefully, "I really loved him, but of course it wore out like a love affair. The fairies have spoiled all that."

If heterosexualist disgust with homosexualist acts is to remain within the realm and confines of tolerance — and what else is tolerance but restraining one's self from verbal or physical abuse of those whose actions and behaviours one finds disgusting? — then it seems to me that reciprocal restraint might be beneficial in the ranks of the multiple "genders" opposite and that the impugning of "repressed homosexuality" and "latent homosexuality" and "homophobia" might be retired from popular usage, and masculine heterosexuality tolerated and accepted at face value for what it is: masculine heterosexuality.

Anyway, that concludes my extensive belabouring of the point. Speaking as the author of this creative work, and leaving aside what inclinations and proclivities Scott Fitzgerald was subject to and/or possessed (which only Scott knew and which were only Scott's business to know), the reader can rest assured that F. Stop Kennedy is a confirmed heterosexualist, born and bred.